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LETTER DATED 8 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a statement issued on 6 March 1999 by the Office of the Government Spokesperson of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement issued on 6 March 1999 by the Office of the
Government Spokesperson of Ethiopia

Ethiopia endures 300 days of Eritrean occupation

Although the Ethiopian defence forces have pushed the Eritrean military out of Badme on the western front, Issaias Afewerki's troops still occupy additional Ethiopian territory. While Badme may be the symbol of Eritrean aggression, it is not the only Ethiopian territory which has been invaded. Eritrean troops continue to occupy territories in the Zalambessa-Aiga region, the Bada-Bure region and Egala region.

For nine months, Eritrean troops have remained in those Ethiopian territories and Ethiopian citizens living in those areas have had to endure 300 days of Eritrean occupation. The territories concerned have always been under Ethiopian administration, whether under Haile Selassie, the Italians or the Dergue. In the last few years, three elections have been held in those localities and MPs represent those areas in the Ethiopian Parliament. Nevertheless, the Eritrean Government has attempted to claim the areas for itself by ordering Ethiopians to declare themselves Eritrean citizens and issuing them Eritrean identity cards. Those not holding the ID cards are not allowed to farm.

Suffering under Eritrean occupation, many Ethiopian women and girls have been raped, while the young men who have not escaped have been captured and forced into the Eritrean army. Churches have been desecrated and are being used as warehouses to store Eritrean weapons, ammunition and other materials for the occupying troops. Some local priests have been forced to serve as storekeepers in their former churches, while others have been imprisoned. Eritrean soldiers have removed the wooden beams which formed the roofs of homes and have transported them away, where they will presumably be used for fuel or building materials in Eritrea.

Issaias' soldiers first invaded on 12 May 1998 when the Eritrean army, backed by tanks, moved into Badme town and its environs, overwhelmed the local police posts and the militia and occupied Ethiopian territory. The Eritrean aggression continued from 31 May to 6 June as Eritrean forces launched invasion attempts in the areas of Zalambessa, Alitena and Aiga in Eastern Tigray. On 9 June, Ethiopian positions at Zalambessa were attacked and Eritrean troops occupied the territory. Two days later, Eritrea attacked Ethiopia on the Afar/Eritrea border in the vicinity of Bure.

Although the liberation of Badme was an important achievement, it must not be forgotten that thousands of Ethiopians continue to endure Eritrean occupation and that sovereign Ethiopian territory still remains in Eritrean hands.
